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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

First Class of South Dakota Soldiers graduate from Warrant Officer Candidate School

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ANNISTON, Ala. – The first class of Warrant Officer Candidates from the 196th Regiment, Regional Training Institute, the Rising Eagles, graduated on Saturday, Sept. 20, at the Anniston Meeting Center in Anniston, Ala. The class of graduates included nine members from the South Dakota Army National Guard and three from the North Dakota Army National Guard.

The twelve Soldiers were the first to complete the new Training Phase II course as part of the new warrant officer training curriculum offered at the 196th Regiment, RTI in Fort Meade, S.D.

The candidates were part of a larger graduating class of 92 students from across the nation, who completed their final phase of Warrant Officer Candidate School while at Fort McClelland, Ala., during the month of September.

The graduating class consisted of students from 17 U.S. states and one territory. Currently, 11 of 22 regional training institutes nationwide are participating in the Warrant Officer Candidate program.

The new phase II course for the 196th RTI is part of an effort by the active-duty Army to give more National Guard operated training institutes the ability to conduct WOCS in their respective states; an initiative started in 2005. 2008 was the first year the 196th initiated phase II for WOCS, and has hopes of adding another phase in the future.

“We have a network of 12 new warrant officers who are going to put the word out about the training here,” said Chief Warrant Officer Brett Anderson, of Rapid City and primary Train, Access, Counsel (TAC) officer for WOCS, Training Phase II at the 196th Regiment (RTI). “I see our program growing and maybe someday, in the future, we can conduct phase III training in South Dakota.”

Becoming a warrant officer is a three-phase process.

Phase I is a distance learning phase where candidates take academic courses on-line about general military topics; ranging from uniform wear and communication skills to the military code-of-conduct and ethics.

Phase II consists of five weekend-drill periods at a state's respective regional training institute, and covers more academic classroom instruction; such as military and warrant officer history and military organization and operating environments.

Phase III is a 15-day active-duty training period where candidates are pushed to their mental and physical limits with leadership reaction courses, road marches and field training exercises.

All phases of instruction are designed to test the limits and abilities of the Soldier and to ensure they become effective leaders within the National Guard.

"Training was extremely intense," said Warrant Officer James L. Fleming, a Rapid City resident with the 196th Regiment (RTI). "It started well over a year ago getting our initial warrant officer packets in place, followed by a training combination of hard work, long hours and, at times, a lot of stress."

Fleming said he chose to become a warrant officer because he wanted to help Soldiers with their problems.

"It is great to be an individual who is a 'go-to' guy and a subject matter expert," said Fleming. "I enjoy that aspect. I like people coming to me and having the opportunity to resolve those issues."

At the graduation ceremony, Fleming was recognized for being on the Commandant's List, graduating in the top 20 percent of the class for his performance during training.

"I was striving for it, and the fact that I was successful at it makes me proud. To have that as a payoff at the end is rewarding," Fleming added.

Photo cut lines:



080920-A-5202T-136: ANNISTON, Ala. – Warrant Officer James L. Fleming of Rapid City, S.D., stands tall as his wife, Jodi, and son Brandon, pin on his new rank during the Warrant Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 20, at the Anniston Meeting Center in Anniston, Ala. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen) (RELEASED)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/080920-A-5202T-136.jpg>



080920-A-5202T-88: ANNISTON, A.L. – Warrant Officer Candidate School Class 08-001 graduated Saturday, Sept. 20, at a graduation ceremony at the Anniston Meeting Center in Anniston, Ala. (Back row, left to right) Mark Kehn, 842nd Engineer Company, SDARNG; Michael Carter, Joint Force Headquarters, SDARNG; Christian Johnson, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, SDARNG; Dustin Masseth, 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company, NDARNG; Roger Pollreisz, Joint Force Headquarters, SDARNG; Sandi Trohkimoinen, Joint Force Headquarters, SDARNG; (Front row, left to right) James Fleming, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), SDARNG; Chandler Raab, NDARNG; Gwen Dungey, 842nd Engineer Company, SDARNG; Brenda Laurenti, Joint Force Headquarters, SDARNG; Jeff Sayler, NDARNG; Loren Gregerson, Company B, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, SDARNG. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen) (RELEASED)

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